

OCCASIONAL PAPERS  
ON THE HISTORY OF  
BOSTON COLLEGE

St. Patrick  
in Gasson Hall



Rev. Charles F. Donovan, S.J.  
University Historian  
November 1995



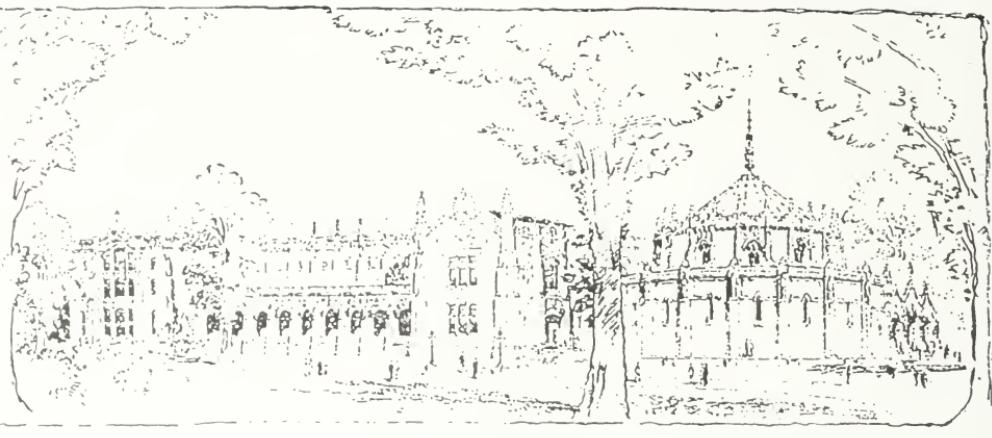
Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016



Today's visitors to Gasson Hall, the most hallowed structure on the Boston College campus, are usually intrigued by the two dramatic representations of St. Patrick: the imposing stained glass window in the assembly room on the first floor and the seventeen-foot-high mural of Patrick and two other dominating saints of Irish history, Brigid and Columbkille, on the wall outside the Fulton Debating Room on the third floor east corridor. Some contemporary viewers may perceive a bit of Irish Catholic chauvinism in the inclusion of two artistic representations of Ireland's great saint in the campus's first building, but the way they came to be in Gasson Hall is not merely a reflection of Irish bias but is an interesting piece of Boston College history.

In point of fact, of course, the pervasive Irishness of early Boston College has long since disappeared. True, buildings on campus bear names such as McElroy, Lyons, Devlin, Cushing, Carney, and Walsh, but in the past three decades other buildings have been named for Medeiros, Conte, Vouté, Bourneuf, Merkert, Rubinstein, and Rahner. Even more telling, perhaps, was a notice posted by the chaplain's office on the bulletin board in St. Mary's Hall (the Jesuit residence) in March 1995, naming fifteen students who had volunteered to spend their spring break doing service in Kingston, Jamaica: Stephanie Carlsten, Craig Dreves, Todd Kenny, Kiana Ledwood, Marisa Leonardini, Douglas Lowe, Edward Ludwigson, David Moorhead, Roshan Rajkumar, Xiomara Ramos, Lashon Rhodes, Maricar Tinio, Kathryn Tschirn, Sean Uiterwyk, and Angela Wiesner. The Irish, and possibly Irish, derivations are outnumbered by a healthy heterogeneous and apparently international assemblage of volunteers. It is fitting that the students were accompanied to Jamaica by a Jesuit chaplain named not O'Brien or Murphy but Ted Dziak.

And, indeed, it should be noted that there was originally no plan to honor the patron saint of Ireland in Father Gasson's first building.



MINOR HALLS

DANIEL O'CONNELL MEMORIAL HALL

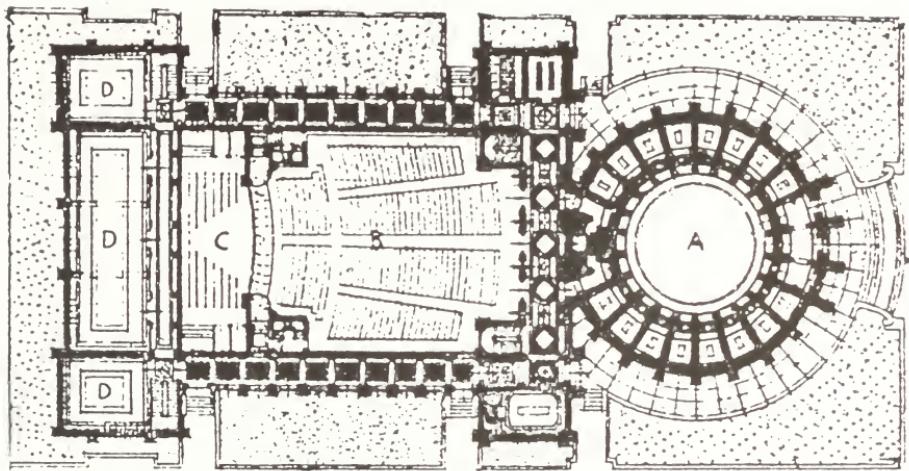
IRISH HALL OF FAME

Architect's sketch of the proposed building complex for an Irish center on the site later occupied by Bapst Library.

Plans called for five statues in the rotunda: Sts. Ignatius, Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans, and Stanilaus Kostka, plus the central St. Michael statue. As recounted below, however, a drive for funds for an Irish Hall of Fame on the College grounds failed, and instead a small donation was given to Father Gasson for an Irish room in the towered building then on the drawing board.

The year 1909 was historic for Boston College in more ways than one: Ground was broken for the first of the projected Gothic buildings at Chestnut Hill, and there arrived in the Jesuit community a dynamic 42-year-old Jesuit, Father James J. Maguire, who in the three years he was assigned to Boston College would stir the greater Boston Irish community with his call to grandeur at Chestnut Hill. A native of Ireland, Father Maguire entered the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus at age 25. He spent the year 1907-1908 at Holy Cross College in Worcester, where he may have learned something of the Irish community of Greater Boston. At any rate, when he became part of the Boston scene two years later, he found that for several decades Irish individuals and organizations had had vague aspirations for some significant building as a gathering place and as an archive for the preservation and promotion of Irish culture and traditions. He immediately had a vision of a grand Gothic structure for Irish Americans on Father Gasson's new campus.

Father Gasson was not Irish. He was born in Kent, England, of a father from French Huguenot background and a mother who had him educated in the faith of the Established Church. When his mother died and his father remarried, Gasson, at age 13, left England with an



KEY TO PLAN: A. HALL OF FAME B. DANIEL O'CONNELL MEMORIAL HALL C. STAGE D. MINOR HALL

Floor plan for the proposed building for the Irish community.

older brother and went to Philadelphia. There he was befriended by two Irish Catholic women who eventually led him to the Jesuits, who received him into the Catholic Church and soon after into the Society of Jesus. So Father Gasson, though not Irish himself, surely had warm feelings for Irish people and their interests, and he gave a free hand to Father Maguire in his grandiose ambitions.

Father Maguire was a popular preacher in the Jesuit Church of the Immaculate Conception. This is how he was described in an Irish newspaper: "The eloquence of the Celt, far famed the world over, has been given this thoughtful young clergyman, with the face of a student and the eyes of an enthusiast, and in burning words, with fire on his tongue, he is appealing for help to make this grand project possible."

The architectural firm of Charles Maginnis and Timothy Walsh, which had been awarded the contract for the campus buildings, was engaged to prepare architectural plans for Father Maguire's bold dream. A brochure was printed soliciting donations, and by mid-August 1909 the Boston papers carried detailed stories of the drive for a monumental structure consisting of an Irish Hall of Fame, polygonal in shape and with 32 alcoves, each representing a county of Ireland. It was to be joined to a massive Daniel O'Connell Memorial Hall with a seating capacity of 2000. The estimated cost of the building was \$300,000.

By hindsight it is clear that the Irish Hall of Fame proposal was preposterous in scope. The Irish presence in Boston in large numbers was hardly four decades old. Although the immigrants were



Thomas Murphy's stained glass window. Held by two angels, the banner at the bottom describes the scene above: "St. Patrick preaching before King Laoghaire at Tara."

making economic and social progress, the advent of streetcars enabled them to move to the suburbs, which meant multiplication of parishes and new church buildings to support. Also, Father Gasson was desperate for funds to complete his academic building. Indeed, construction had to be suspended for a time until he got permission from superiors in Rome to sell a large tract of land on Massachusetts Avenue (the site of the present plant of the Boston Edison Company) that had been purchased in 1898 as a possible athletic field. So Father Maguire's magnificent Celtic dream ended not with a bang but with a whimper.

Well, a sort of whimper compared with Father Maguire's grandiose architectural plans, but if a whimper, the assembly room in Gasson Hall is the loveliest whimper in Boston College construction history. We have no record of how much money was raised by Father Maguire's drive. If it realized even a tenth of the estimated cost of the building, the yield would have been \$30,000. There were promotional expenses and the architect's fee to be paid. Whatever was left was turned over to Father Gasson for the establishment of an "Irish room" in his new building, and he honored the failed hopes of Boston's Irish by using their money to beautify the most elegant room in the Maginnis and Walsh building.

At the rear of the hall is a painted inscription printed in Gaelic in two lines: "The Irish Hall in Boston / Gift of the Irish Community." Beneath the acknowledgement of the gift is a painted shield that contains within its borders identifiable segments of the coats of arms of the four provinces of Ireland: Connaught, Ulster, Leinster, and Munster. On the walls, just below the ceiling, is an elaborate border of green and gold called Celtic interlacing. On the ceiling is a pattern in the same green and gold color. But unquestionably the most visible testimony in the room to the College's Irish heritage is the dramatic St. Patrick window.

#### THE ST. PATRICK WINDOW

The style of the window is not unrelated to a tour by Father Gasson shortly after being named president of Boston College in 1907, when he visited university campuses in the East and Midwest to study their architecture. Significantly, he was most impressed by the buildings of the University of Chicago, founded less than twenty years earlier. The University of Chicago was perhaps the most prominent example of an institution of higher learning embracing the architecture of the Gothic Revival. Thus it is not surprising that after a competition among

architects for a plan for the Chestnut Hill campus and its early buildings, Father Gasson chose a firm committed to the neo-Gothic style, led by Charles D. Maginnis and Timothy Walsh.

There is no evidence that stained glass windows were originally planned for the three Gothic-arch windows on the north wall of the assembly room. They were filled with plain glass when the senior class of 1913 came out to the Heights for the dedication of the "Recitation Building" on March 28 and thereafter attended classes at Chestnut Hill until commencement. And the three plain glass windows were still in place ten months later when Father Gasson wrote the following letter:

January 10, 1914

Mr. Thomas J. Murphy  
of Murphy & Millson

My Dear Mr. Murphy,

Mr. P. J. Sullivan and Mr. D. J. Dwyer of the Committee for the O'Connell Memorial Hall windows have agreed with me that your firm should have the contract for the first window in the Assembly Hall, the subject to be depicted being St. Patrick at Tara. There are some modifications to be made in the sketch, but the general outline is heartily approved. Could you arrange about these changes by Thursday or Friday?

Yours Sincerely,  
Thomas I. Gasson, S.J.

Several things about this brief but eventful note deserve mention. P. J. Sullivan and D. J. Dwyer are not listed as Boston College alumni in 1911. Most likely they had been influential members (perhaps with artistic interests?) of Father Maguire's Irish Hall of Fame campaign. Father Gasson refers to the O'Connell Memorial Hall. This is clearly a carry-over from the Daniel O'Connell Memorial Hall project and a bow to both Father Maguire (who we know wanted Boston College's name changed to O'Connell University after the patriot Daniel O'Connell) and to contributors to the Daniel O'Connell Hall project. But the name never caught on. Maybe it was felt that there would be confusion about which O'Connell was intended to be honored—Daniel, the patriot, or William, the future cardinal.

Father Gasson refers to the *windows* (plural) in his opening sentence and speaks of the contract for the *first* window. With the unexpected windfall of funds from Father Maguire, there must have been

some thought of putting stained glass representations in all three windows. Was it found that the residue from Father Maguire's drive wouldn't cover the cost of three windows? Was there a dilemma about suitable themes for the other windows? Would they also be religious – for example, St. Brendan, St. Brigid, St. Columbkille? Or secular – for example, Daniel O'Connell? In any event, happily there is only one stained glass window. Stained glass on either side of it would have muted or destroyed the stunning dominance of the St. Patrick group in the room. Also, with so much dark wood in the room and natural light only from north-facing windows, three massive stained glass windows would have produced a rather gloomy hall.

Father Gasson's letter specified that the window was to represent St. Patrick at Tara. The event to be depicted was the eventful meeting between the redoubtable pagan King Laoghaire and the Catholic missionary bishop, Patrick. The king, abetted by his Druid spokesman, challenged Patrick's right to be present among them, but the saint's impressive appearance and eloquent preaching of Christ to the assembly moved many to embrace Christianity. Though the king clung to his pagan beliefs, he gave Patrick freedom of the realm to preach his faith as he wished. This event thus marked the beginning of the Christianization of Ireland and led to Patrick's being its patron saint.

Who was Thomas Murphy, the artist to whom Father Gasson gave this important commission? He was one of the outstanding men of his craft in Boston in the first decades of the twentieth century. His studio, located at 475 Tremont Street from 1901 to 1920, later moved to 66 Chandler Street in the South End. A professional magazine, *Stained Glass*, printed a list of the members of the Stained Glass Association of America in 1931. There were 39 firms nationally: four in New York, including the well-known studios of Daprato and Rambusch, and three in Boston, namely, Wilbur Herbert Burnham, Charles J. Connick, and Thomas J. Murphy. (Burnham's name will appear in another connection in these pages.) Connick was one of the country's giants, not only as an artist, but as a scholar of stained glass. Association with such prestigious firms means that Murphy represented the top of his profession.

In April 1995 the *Boston Globe* carried an obituary with the headline "Orin Skinner, 102; a craftsman in medieval art of stained glass." Skinner was an apprentice and later an associate of the great Connick, whom he described as opening his studio in 1913 to "rescue the stained glass craft from the abysmal depths of opalescent picture windows." When Connick died in 1945 Skinner became president of the guild at the Connick studio.

In a lengthy article in *Stained Glass* in 1965, Orin Skinner took the reader on a stained glass tour of Boston. Coming to Jamaica Plain he wrote, “Turning left on Perkins Street which leads into Centre going east, shortly on the left is the Blessed Sacrament Church with aisle and rose windows by Connick. The clerestory windows are considerably older, by another early craftsman, Thomas Murphy, sometimes called the Dean of Boston stained glass men.” High praise indeed from a disciple of Connick, and further confirmation that the artist of our St. Patrick window was a master of his craft.

For a contemporary professional commentary on Thomas Murphy’s window, we are fortunate to have the evaluation of a colleague from the Department of Visual Arts at the College of the Holy Cross, Professor Virginia C. Raguin. Professor Raguin is a scholar of stained glass, as attested by the fact that she is the National Director of the Census of Stained Glass Windows in America. Following are her comments on Thomas Murphy’s window:

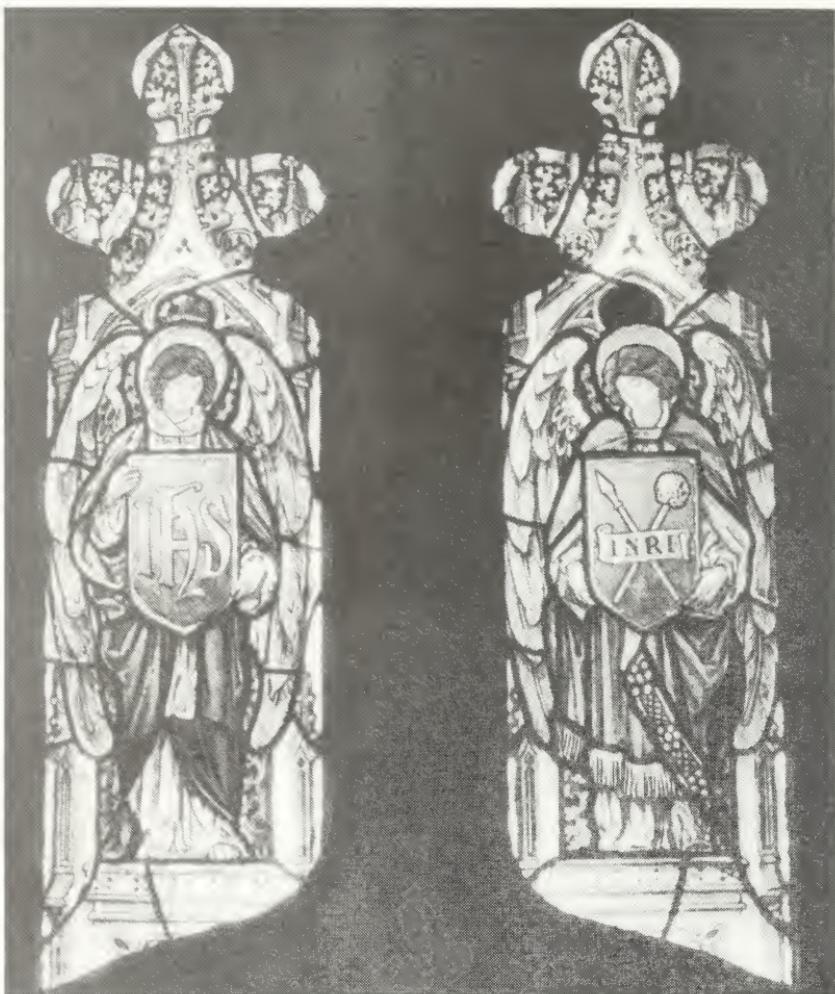
The window of St. Patrick demonstrates both the strength of tradition and sensitivity to early twentieth century ideas of artistic craftsmanship. The window is composed of three tall double-arched lancets set above a horizontal base and crowned by Gothic tracery inspired by English perpendicular models. At the top of the window, six Gothic lights present angels holding the “Arma Christi.” These symbols of the Passion of Christ represent objects that figure in key episodes of the Lord’s Passion: on the left, the ladder used to take Christ’s body down from the cross and the tunic for which the soldiers cast lots; in the center, the IHS monograph of the name of Jesus and the Latin abbreviation INRI (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) posted during the Crucifixion, with the lance and the vinegar-soaked sponge; to the right, the crown of thorns used to both torture and mock Christ’s kingship and the hammer and tongs used to remove the nails as his followers received his body.

The authority of Christ and his emissary Patrick, given a power that transcends earthly power of wisdom, is central to the message of the window. Christ’s authority through his suffering is extended to Patrick, below, who confronts Loaghaire, King of Tara. The composition, extending over three lancets and conceived as one scene, structures this confrontation. To the right, the king sits surrounded by his counselors, elevated on a throne, framed by a wall decoration of Celtic interlace. To the left, Patrick’s clerical followers are framed by the heavy arch of a doorway. One holds a great cross worked in Celtic interlace,



Above the window's central figures, St. Patrick's religious mission is portrayed by six angels holding the "Arma Christi" described in Professor Raguin's text. (See also the following two pages.)

the other a cross-shaped staff supporting a banner inscribed IHS. Patrick, in brilliant green robes in the center, strides forward with his crosier of episcopal authority, trampling the Celtic axe at his feet. Thus the power of faith overcomes that of the sword. Patrick's eloquence, not military might, achieves Ireland's conversion. The strength of the Irish culture is not neglected. The viewers' eyes are caught by the intense green of the leafy



circlet worn by the Druidic advisor, seated with harp and with open book. The green links him to Patrick, and the window hints at a continuity between the ancient and the new religion, with the old religion transformed and elevated by the one true faith.

Technically, the window shows extremely meticulous execution. The figures are executed with considerable three-dimensional modeling, but constructed within a limited spatial plane. Inspired by late medieval models, the window includes a considerable amount of white glass, enhanced by vivid jewel-like shades of green, blue, and purple concentrated in the figural areas.



The intricate designs of the robes of the King of Tara and the Druid are accomplished by a technique of flashed glass in which the pieces of glass are produced with both a colored and a clear glass side. The artist blocks out portions of the pattern and places the glass in an acid bath which erodes the portion of the glass surface left exposed. Afterwards, the glass can be treated with silver stain, a technique which allows the execution of various shades of yellow.

Vitreous paint in tones of brown can also be applied to the interior surface, enabling increased embellishment. The paint must be applied evenly to the glass and fired at controlled tem-



Closeup of Patrick and the king: The left lancet shows St. Patrick's clerical companions. The central lancet depicts the saint, with soldiers of the king in the background. The right lancet presents the formidable King Laoghaire, with a druidic priest in the foreground.

peratures to fuse with the material itself, producing a surface where the paint actually becomes the glass. Tonal washings and line are manipulated through application or removal of paint in a varying range of strengths. The scroll and angels at the base of the window exemplify this technique beautifully. The sense of an undulating banner is produced through variation in modelling of dark stipple paint. One area of the scroll is inscribed with a delicate leaf pattern achieved by the removal of paint with a pointed stick, producing a silhouette of slender white lines against a dark ground. The highlights on the angel's robes are produced through delicate parallel strokes lifting off the soft matt wash that had been applied over the brilliant blue glass. The artist achieves a contrast of textures through such work, setting the sheen of the angel's robe against the granular texture of the architecture or the matt finish of the scroll. The bearded male head, for example, of Patrick or King Loaghaire and his Druid, with its undulating bone structure and luxuriant flow of curls, provides a particularly rich subject for painterly expressiveness. The color in this glass does not fade and the painted details, if well fired, do not flake off. The St. Patrick window, positioned for close observation by the spectator, is an unusually stable example of monumental imagery.

To our knowledge, Professor Raguin's is the first professional critique of Thomas Murphy's St. Patrick's window since it was installed over 80 years ago. We are grateful for her attestation to the fact that Father Gasson provided for the middle window frame of the assembly hall a stained glass window worthy of the exquisite Gothic structure it adorns.

#### THE ST. PATRICK MURAL

The second image of St. Patrick in Gasson Hall is a painting on the wall above the two doors to the Fulton Debating Room\* on the third corridor east. The decoration was added not directly to honor the patron saint of Ireland or to salute the College's Irish heritage. Rather, its purpose was to honor and keep alive the memory of a man whose first name just happened to be Patrick—the dean of the College, Rev. Patrick McHugh, S.J., affectionately known to the students as "Packy" McHugh.

\*See note at end of article

Father McHugh, a Boston native, had only one assignment after his ordination: dean at Boston College from 1921 to 1935. As the existence of the mural testifies, Father McHugh was a beloved figure to the B.C. men of his time. What was the reason for the student and alumni adulation? Of medium height with a rather stern visage, he was not an imposing figure. He did not have the eloquence or oral command of some of the other Jesuits on the faculty, and one would not spontaneously describe him as outgoing or hearty. (The author should here confess to having been a student for four years during Father McHugh's deanship, but although his observations are personal, they are representative of the general student feeling). Father McHugh was seen as a man of absolute integrity and of total dedication to the College. He regularly substituted for sick or otherwise absent teachers. If the subject was one beyond his repertoire, he would nevertheless hold the class and give a constructive talk on a worthwhile topic. Such sessions were never boring or resented by the students. For students in trouble, economic or other, he was compassionate and caring. Such qualities were especially appreciated during the Depression.

During the McHugh years the presidents, Father William Devlin and Father James Dolan, were occupied mostly with external matters. Father Devlin ran the great public drive that led to the building of the science building (now Devlin Hall) and started construction of Bapst Library. Father Dolan completed Bapst and in the Depression, with no public drive, added the beautiful Gothic wing to St. Mary's Hall. But these gentleman were rarely seen by or in contact with students. For Boston College students of the McHugh years, *he* ran the College, *he* was the administration in the students' eyes—an administration that was kindly, straightforward, and committed.

The Boston College community was shocked at Dean McHugh's sudden death in January 1935 at the peak of his career, only fifty years of age. The class of 1927, who had entered in 1923 and were thus acquainted with and devoted to Father McHugh as students and alumni for all but two of his years at Boston College, had begun looking forward to their tenth anniversary and pondering an appropriate gift to the College for that occasion. Father McHugh's death settled the matter: They would give a memorial in his honor.

How the St. Patrick mural was chosen is hard to tell at this date. Contemporary accounts of the mural mention William Marnell as the class member who was in charge of the project. A multi-talented man—teacher, college professor, author of seven books, editorialist for a Boston paper, and for many years the wit of the Clover Club—Bill Marnell's rich life ended in 1991, so his recollections of how the

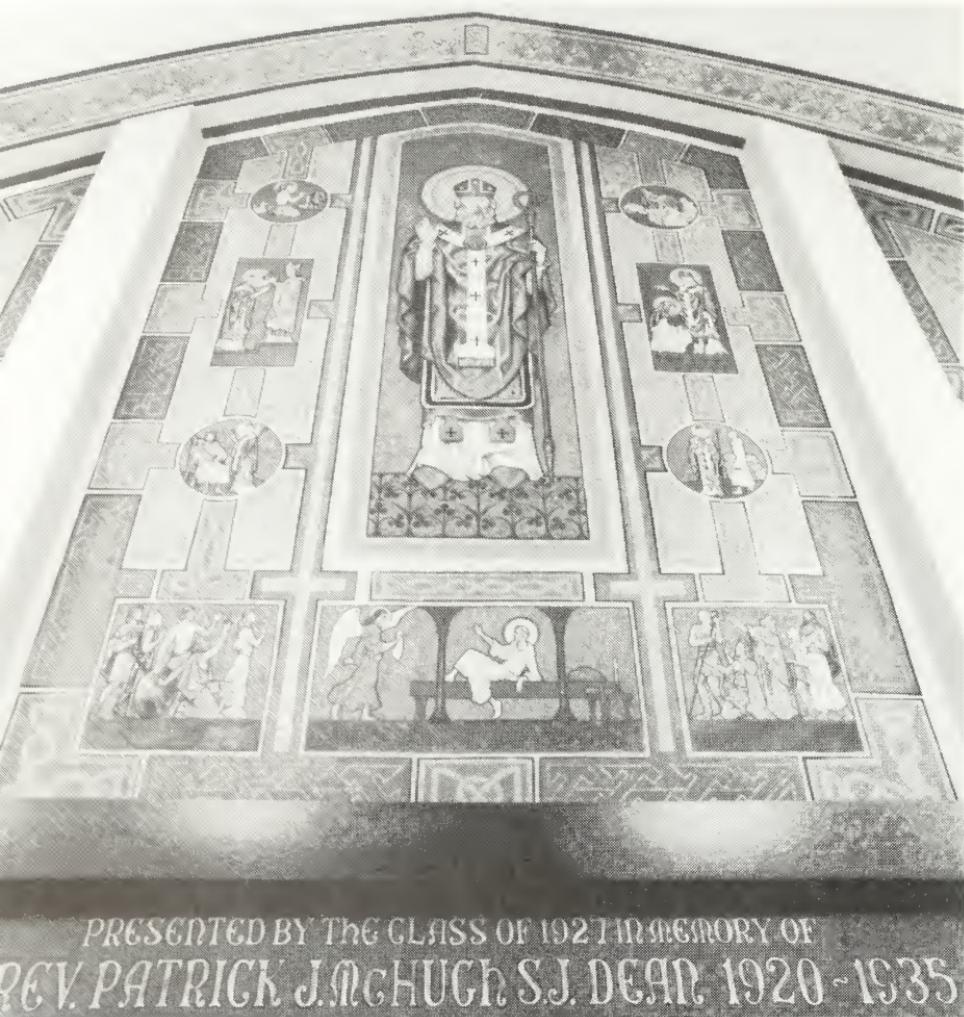
painting and its artist were chosen are not available to us. But the focus on St. Patrick is obvious from the name of the man to be honored. The dimensions of the space to be covered—namely, the arched wall outside the Fulton Room and above its doors—presented a natural central position for St. Patrick, reaching from the level of the two door tops to the peak of the arch. From an artistic viewpoint, the two smaller spaces on either side of the central figure had to be filled, and it was evidently decided that two of the other great saints of Ireland, St. Brigid and St. Columbkille, could appropriately be placed there.

The artist chosen to paint the mural was a young art student, Joseph Barrett, a senior at the Massachusetts College of Art. Today Barrett is active in Florida as an architectural renderer, translating architects' conceptions into full-color paintings. (Incidental to his painting, he runs an orange grove that surrounds his studio.) As a youth he saved enough money from caddying and other work to pay for his first year and a half at art school. When his funds ran out, he told the college president he would have to leave and earn more money to continue. But the president was able to get him a WPA (Works Progress Administration) grant, one of Franklin Roosevelt's Depression strategies that, among other things, gave work to unemployed artists.

Fortunately for Barrett, in his freshmen year he had discovered the stained glass studio of Wilbur Burnham, mentioned above along with Charles Connick and Thomas Murphy as one of the three Boston members of the Stained Glass Association of America. Because of Barrett's persistent presence in the studio, he was made a sort of apprentice. Surprisingly, the informal apprentice's WPA project in his junior year was to make ten stained glass windows for the library of the new building of the College of Art on Brookline Avenue. The quality of his work may be judged by the fact that, when the College of Art moved to a new location in Boston in the 1980s, the windows were installed there as illuminated wall decorations, although not in the library.

This saga of Mr. Barrett's youthful achievements as an artist is told because of the intriguing linkage it provides through stained glass between the two St. Patrick images in Gasson Hall, the mural and the window, and because it validates the talent of the artist chosen by the class of 1927 to do their mural. Indeed Barrett's working sketch of the commissioned mural triptych earned him the top prize among senior projects in the College of Art.

Mr. Barrett recalls that, after considerable research on his subjects, he painted the canvases in his own studio under some pressure to finish the work. When the paintings were completed, friends from



PRESENTED BY THE CLASS OF 1927 IN MEMORY OF  
REV. PATRICK J. McHUGH S.J. DEAN 1920-1935

The central, St. Patrick, panel of Joseph Barrett's mural, with the dedication to Father McHugh below.

the College of Art helped him affix the canvases to the wall in Gasson Hall, though even after all these years one would think Barrett had painted directly on the wall. He finished in such a rush that he didn't think to put his signature on his work—an omission he hopes to remedy on his next visit to Boston.

The *Boston Sunday Post* of March 15, 1936 contained a full-page article on Barrett's mural in its color feature section, including a color photo of the central image of St. Patrick (13 inches in height and 4 1/4 inches wide). There were also smaller photos of the paintings

of St. Brigid and St. Columbkille (4 1/2 by 2 inches). The accompanying article was written by Max R. Grossman, who in 1947 would become the first provost of Brandeis University and later had a long career in foreign service for the U.S. Information Agency. Herbert Kenny of the class of 1934, who had a lifetime career in Boston journalism, says he knew the *Post's* Grossman as a liberal and urbane person. Grossman wrote his article with the sympathy and enthusiasm one might have expected from an Irish Catholic alumnus of Boston College. The article carried the large-type headline: "St. Patrick's Mural, to Be Unveiled at Boston College, Considered Finest Likeness of Ireland's Greatest Bishop." Writing of the artist's figure of St. Patrick, Grossman said:

The first encompassing impression which the beholder obtains is of living emerald. The good saint's chasuble sweeps from his shoulders to ankles in pure Irish green. A crimson cross, centering on his breast, makes the verdant garment seem more striking still.

St. Patrick's face is that of a kindlier Old Testament prophet. There is that great Mosaic strength of features—an impression of mighty irresistible power. But it is kindly spiritual strength which is depicted. Indeed—though he was not Irish—St. Patrick's eyes seem ready to light up in twinkling Irish good humor.

Grossman was struck by Barrett's decision to paint St. Patrick standing on a decorative field of shamrock, and the article repeats the legend of the saint's using the shamrock, with its three leaves, to explain the trinity to the King of Tara, whom he tried to convert. The writer's final tribute to the artist: "His St. Patrick is a superb achievement. The figure is loving, warm, friendly, heroic, inspiring, beautiful."

On either side and beneath the majestic central painting of Patrick are nine smaller paintings depicting major events of the saint's life—for example, as a boy slave in Ireland, his consecration as bishop, building his cathedral at Armagh, and his meeting with St. Brigid. Thus, one contrast between Thomas Murphy's stained glass window and Joseph Barrett's mural is that the window presents the saint in dramatic action at one epochal moment of his career, whereas the dominant feature of the mural is a bigger-than-life portrait of St. Patrick such as prelates and princes and presidents have done during their lifetime as the "official" likeness of the personage. But in its nine smaller Patrick paintings, the mural also gives imaginative painted snapshots of the saint at critical points in his life from childhood to his deathbed—in a sense, an artistic biography of the great man.



The right segment of the mural depicts St. Brigid.

St. Columbkille, on the left side of the St. Patrick mural, and St. Brigid on the right, are given smaller presentations similar to that of St. Patrick—namely, a standing portrait of the saint alone, surrounded by smaller scenes from the saint's life involving groups of people. No further details are given here about Barrett's treatment of these companion saints because of the present focus on St. Patrick in Gasson Hall.

Beneath the triptych is a bold dedicatory statement, as broad as the major, central panel and 15 inches in height. The painted message occupies two lines:

PRESENTED BY THE CLASS OF 1927 IN MEMORY OF  
REV. PATRICK J. McHUGH, S.J., DEAN 1920-1935



The left segment of the mural portrays St. Columbkille.

The sponsors of the mural left no doubt as to its inspiration and intention. For the record, though, it should be noted that Father McHugh became Dean in 1921, not in 1920.

Regrettably, today's viewer of the Barrett mural cannot stand far enough from the painting to enjoy a generous, encompassing perspective. One of the wondrous features of the first Maginnis and Walsh building was that the north-south corridors of the upper floors had spacious alcoves that, above chest-high walls, were open to the rotunda. The St. Patrick mural is opposite one of those former alcoves that had allowed a viewer to stand as much as twenty-five feet from the painting. When Gasson Hall was renovated in the 1970s, the modern building code required major changes in the location of stairs and the introduction of elevators, and in the course of these

alterations the alcoves were closed in. The result is that the farthest one can stand from the painting is eleven feet. It seems unlikely that this handicap will ever be removed. But, who knows? After our proposed Gothic Buildings are completed, perhaps—with the help of engineering genius and the intercession of St. Patrick—Gasson's original alcoves overlooking the rotunda will be restored.

As was noted at the beginning, two imposing likenesses of St. Patrick in one building may seem excessive, but as the constituency of the university becomes national and ethnically diverse, it may be appropriate that the first building on the second location of Boston College contains prominent reminders of the roots of the institution. For fifty years Irish Catholics gave encouragement and, out of their poverty, financial support to the Jesuits for a college for their sons. And then there rose on the crown of the most admired hill in the Boston area the great Gothic tower that was the fruition and proclamation of their faith. For them the most moving symbol of the faith of their fathers was St Patrick. As new campus buildings arise year by year and decade after decade, it is well that the campus' first building speaks to the newcomers and their inhabitants of the university's origins and aspirations.

\* \* \*

A Note on Fulton Hall and the Fulton Room in Gasson Hall: People who are aware, by its glorious presence, of the new Gothic Fulton Hall that houses the Carroll School of Management are sometimes confused and maybe even irritated to hear of a Fulton room in Gasson Hall. Well, humble though it may be when contrasted with its wonderfully renovated neighbor, the Fulton Debating Room antedated the original Fulton Hall by some 35 years. Father Robert Fulton, first dean of Boston College, founded a debating society in 1868. It was the only student activity to which he assigned its own room in the old College quarters in the South End. Fulton was president of Boston College twice, from 1870 to 1880 and from 1888 to 1891. Soon after he retired from his second presidency, the debating society adopted his name. In 1909 when Father Gasson was planning the first Chestnut Hill building, he provided a small amphitheater for the Fulton Debating Society on the third floor. That is the Fulton Room, on whose corridor wall is Joseph Barrett's mural. Fulton's name deserves to be associated with Boston College debating because of his original sponsorship and encouragement of debate as a student activity. It also deserves to be on a major university building because of his unquestioned leadership in establishing the academic style and conscience of Boston College in the nineteenth century.

*Photographs by Lee Pellegrini.*



